

**Kathmandu --** The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID/Nepal) supported court-referred mediation center was launched at the Dolakha District Court in Charikot today. Introducing mediation centers is an important component of USAID/Nepal's Strengthen Rule of Law program. Mediation centers ensure greater access to justice for all Nepalis by alleviating the overwhelming case burden on the formal justice system.

The center was inaugurated by Mr. Rana Bahadur Bam, Chief Judge of the Patan Appellate Court, who reiterated the need for and the benefits of such mediation centers. Mr. Ramchandra Rai and Mr. Balendra Rupakheti, newly appointed District Court Judges and the Chief District Officer, Mr. Kashi Raj Dahal, were also present.

USAID/Nepal's support for the mediation program includes development of a standardized mediation curriculum and training manual, training on mediation practices and public education campaigns on the benefits of court-referred mediation.

USAID/Nepal's two-year program to strengthen the rule of law is being implemented by the Asia Foundation and its local NGO partners. The goal of the program is to build the institutional capacity of the judiciary, promote alternative dispute resolution, and increase access to justice to help consolidate peace and improve democratic governance in Nepal.

"The program endeavors to build on previous USAID successes and strengthen local capacity for sustainable, tangible benefits. It seeks maximum impact by drawing on local resources and working closely with crucial state actors, such as the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Law, Justice, and Constituent Assembly", said Beth S. Paige, Mission Director of USAID/Nepal. "The program will help to consolidate, improve, and expand sustainable mediation services toward the larger goal of establishing a culture of constructive, non-violent conflict resolution."

Under the Rule of Law program, USAID is supporting the establishment of four mediation centers – the first was launched in the Lalitpur District Court earlier this year; Dolakha is the second; a third one will soon be opened in Kavrepalanchowk District Court and one more is planned. USAID/Nepal funded the establishment of three mediation centers under a previous program.

## **USAID-supported mediation center opens in Dolakha District**

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